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AUTHOR Fletcher-Carter, Ruth; Paez, Doris
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ABSTRACT

Since deaf students who are members of more than one cultural group (e.g., Deaf and Black, Deaf and Asian, Deaf and Native American, Deaf and Hispanic) seldom encounter teachers who are deaf, let alone deaf and representative of their ethnic/racial group, this paper offers a framework to help teachers attend to the variations in beliefs, traditions, and values which impact these students' lives. The framework includes forms for identifying personal culture variables and generating curricula adaptation; encourages the use of "cultural brokers" to provide a bridge between cultures; and offers six steps for identifying cultural variables and generating strategies for inclusion in curricular methods and the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The Student's Personal Culture Form is used to explore a student's personal culture. A second form, the Personal Culture Curricular Strategy Form, is used to summarize findings from the student's personal culture form. It offers school personnel a list of cultural features to incorporate into their curriculum and their approaches to the child and family. Sample forms are attached. (DB)

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Exploring Students' Personal Cultures: A Tool for Use in IEP Development

by

Ruth Fletcher-Carter and Doris Paez
New Mexico State University
Department of Special Education/Communication Disorders
Tel: 505-646-2402 (V/T)
E-mail: rfletche@nmsu.edu
E-mail: dpaez@nmsu.edu

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Deaf students who may be members of more than one cultural group (e.g., Deaf and Black, Deaf and Asian, Deaf and Native American, Deaf and Hispanic) seldom encounter teachers who are Deaf, let alone Deaf *and* representative of their ethnic/racial group. Such bi- or multi-culturality among students who are Deaf requires that teachers gain an understanding of the different shared knowledge; belief systems; ways of living in the world and acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and to generate social behavior (Bennett, 1995).

So how do teachers of the Deaf identify, let along attend to, the variations in beliefs, traditions, and values across cultures and within society that may impact their students' world view or personal cultures?

Application of the Personal Culture Framework

The Personal Culture Framework includes a strategy for exploring a students' personal culture and provides school personnel, particularly teachers, with a list of cultural features which they can incorporate into their curriculum and/or approaches to the child and his/her family. The framework includes forms for identifying personal culture variables and generating curricula adaptation. The *Student's Personal Culture Form* (Appendix A) is to be utilized by teachers to identify the cultural variables within four dimensions and across five loci which influence the child. A second form, the *Personal Culture Curricular Strategy Form* (Appendix B), is used to summarize findings from the *Student's Personal Cultural Form* and to generate strategies for approaching cultural variables no shared across the five loci. Educators are cautioned,

however, that in completing the *Personal Culture Form* they do not overgeneralize nor rely solely on stereotypical information found in the literature.

The exploration of students' personal cultures requires the use of *cultural brokers* (Correa, 1989). These brokers are individuals who provide a bridge between cultures and can be used as informants, mediators, and/or advocates. As cultural brokers, they can share information regarding cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors; issues related to group membership; experiences associated with minority status; and transforming life events. Depending on the situation, parents, other family members, or members of the community may act as cultural brokers (Correa, 1989). They may be found within the school: bilingual educators, English as Second Language specialists, migrant educators, Chapter 1 teachers, and staff. Functionally, the use of a cultural broker requires that the teacher discuss all of the variables in the *Student's Personal Culture Form* with as many brokers as possible.

Having accepted the paradigm of Personal Cultures influenced by family, neighborhood, vicinity/community and school, and having further accepted the paradigm of a framework in which to record the various influences, how can a teacher put the information from cultural brokers to work in the classroom and with the families?

Following are the six steps used in applying the *Student's Personal Culture Framework* which includes the use of the *Student's Personal Culture* and *Curricular Strategy Forms* with the cultural broker(s): **Step 1:** Based on

information gathered from cultural broker(s) informant(s) and research, the teacher writes down key words/phrases to complete each cell in the Personal Culture Form; **Step 2:** The teacher circles the variables on the Personal Culture Form which are NOT SHARED across the five locus columns: (a) family, (b) neighborhood, (c) vicinity/community; (d) school, and (e) child; **Step 3:** The teacher lists the variables not shared in the first column of the *Curricular Strategy Form*; **Step 4:** The teacher circles the Loci which do not share the variable in column 2 of the *Curricular Strategy Form*; **Step 5:** Teacher and cultural broker(s) generate strategies for addressing these NOT SHARED variables within the four dimensions--these curricular strategies are written in column 3 of the *Curricular Strategy Form*; and **Step 6:** Strategies are then included in curricular methods and content for students' Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs).

The personal cultural framework requires educators to obtain information that is beyond holiday/tourism curriculum. Historical experiences, migration pattern, accomplishments of members of the group, values, and belief systems and communication styles are also to be addressed (Garcia & Malkin, 1993).

References

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STUDENT'S PERSONAL CULTURE FORM

Student's Name:

DIMENSIONS	CULTURAL VARIABLES	L Family	O Neighborhood	C Vicinity/ Community	U School	S Child
Cultural Values, Attitudes and Behaviors	Demographic Influences (urban, suburban, rural)					
	Verbal Behaviors (the what, how, when , where and why of language)					
	Nonverbal Behaviors (show of affection, meaning of common facial expression/ gestures, use of space)					
	Achievement Orientation / Education Level					
	Temporal Orientation (past-, present-, future-oriented)					
	Thinking/Cognitive Processes					
	Religious/Spiritual Affiliations					
	Leisure Activities (recreation, sports, hobbies, stress relievers)					
Sense of Group Membership	Dominant Ethnic Identity (country of origin, national affiliations, ethnic density)					
	U.S. Generational Context (first-, second-, third-generation, etc.)					
	Socio-economic Status (low, middle, high)					
	Decision-making/ Action-taking Attitudes					
	Observances (holidays, celebrations, ceremonies)					
	Family Definition (influence of family/kin)					
Experiences Associated with Minority Status	Sociopolitical Context (immigration pattern, resident status, experiences with racism)					
Transforming Life Events	Normal Events (developmental transitions)					
	Critical Events (traumatic events, illness, surgeries)					

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CURRICULAR	STRATEGY	FORM
CULTURAL VARIABLES	LOCUS F=Family N= Neighborhood V=Vicinity/Community S=School C=Child	STRATEGIES
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
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